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White-tailed Lapwing, *Vanellus leucurus* (Lichtenstein, 1823) (Aves, Charadriidae) in Nallasopara, Palghar, Maharashtra state, India — a rare species for western Maharashtra

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Abstract: The White-tailed Lapwing, *Vanellus leucurus*, is a winter visitor to India that breeds in Central Asia and portions of southern Russia. It is occasionally sighted in the western region of Maharashtra state, India, but rarely documented. Previously it is known from only a few records in this state. We report a new record of *V. leucurus* from Maharashtra state, as well as an earlier sighting of this species.

Key words: wader; saltpan; subcontinent; migratory; winter range; Mumbai, wetland

The White-tailed Lapwing, *Vanellus leucurus* (Lichtenstein, 1823), is a medium-sized wader belonging to the family Charadriidae. It breeds in Central Asia and parts of southern Russia. There are non-migratory populations in Iraq and Iran (del Hoyo et al. 1996). However, there are migratory populations that breed in Russia and migrate in winter to northeast Africa, the Middle East, and the Indian Subcontinent and return to their breeding grounds in March and April (del Hoyo et al. 1996; Hayman et al. 1986). It occurs singly, in pairs, or in small groups (Urban et al. 1986). It is a species of Least Concern (Birdlife International 2015).

On 28 October 2015 at 10:00 h, we observed a bird among short grasses during a casual bird watching session near the saltpans (19°24′31.3″ N, 072°48′58.1″ E) in the Nallasopara region of Palghar District in Maharashtra, India (Figure 3). It was photographed for confirmation of the identification (Figures 1 and 2).

The habitat consisted of short grasses and marshland surrounded by saltpans. This area is near a human settlement, but is disturbed mostly only on weekends. The bird was observed for ca. 35 minutes and was feeding most of the time.

This species was previously recorded in November 2009 in Vasai, ca. 5 km south of the new sighting, by two of us (VS and AP) with senior birders Shashank Dalvi and Saurabh Sawant. This previous record was similarly from a marshland with grasses.

We identified the species as the White-tailed Lapwing using keys in Grimmet et al. (2011) as well as Message and Taylor (2013). The bill is blackish and the head is plain; the forehead is whitish with an indistinct supercilium and chin, and the face is pale. The back is

Figures 1 and 2. White-tailed Lapwing photographed on 28 December 2015 at Nallasopara, Palghar, India (photo by Varun Satose).

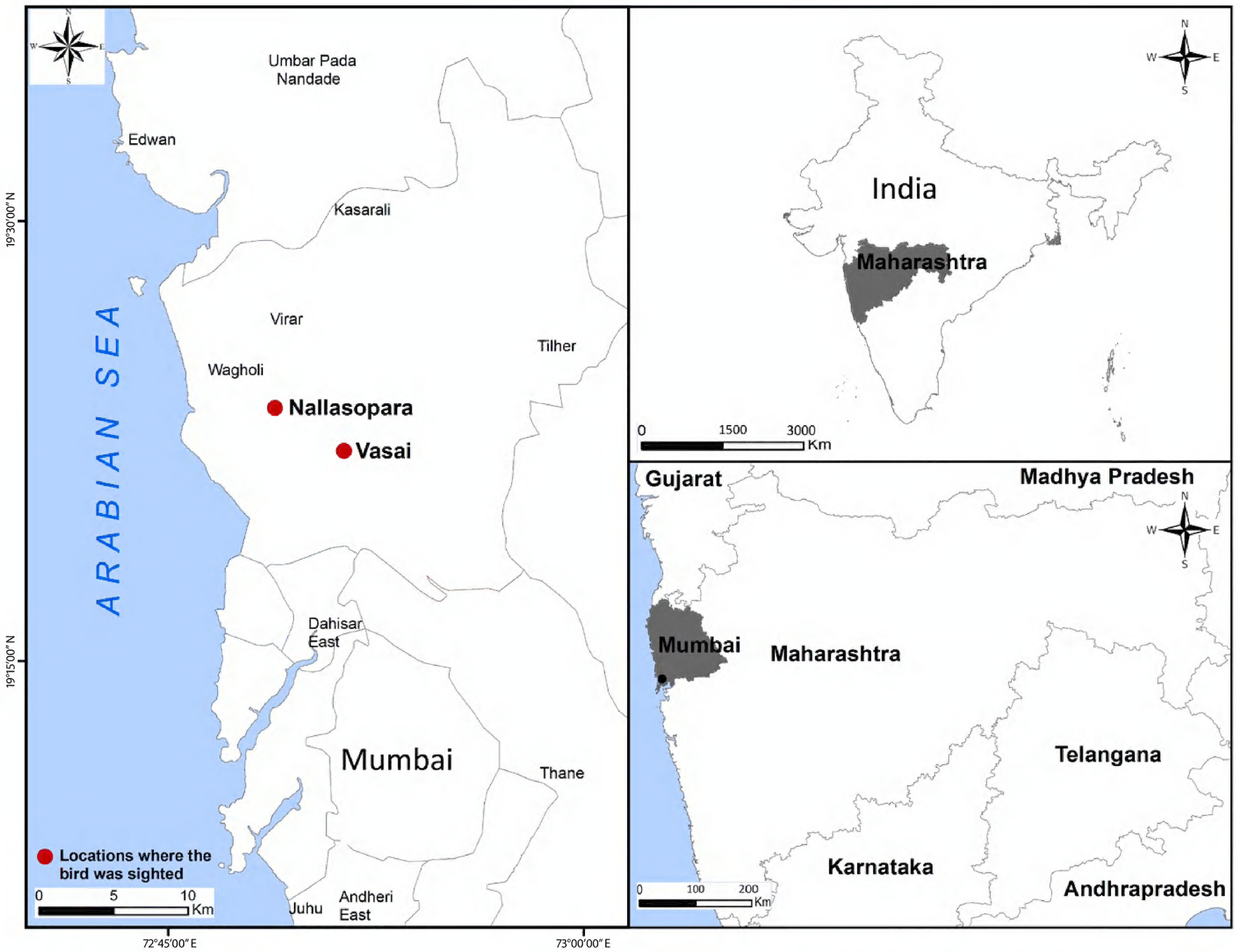

Figure 3. Map of northwestern part of Maharashtra state, with current (Nallasopara) and previous (Vasai) records where the White-tailed Lapwing was sighted. Insets show the location of the records in Maharashtra state and India.

brownish and the breast is grey. The greater coverts are black and white greater coverts, and the primary feathers, with wings closed, are black. The legs are long and yellow. The tail feathers are white and lack black tips unlike other plovers in the region.

Other places in and near Mumbai and in western Maharashtra from where this species has been recorded are Bhayandar and Naigaon (Lad and Patil 2015), the Bharat Petroleum Corporation mangroves (Verma et al. 2004), Manor (Monga 2001), Gondur Tank, Dhule district (Vyawahare 1992), Nandurbar (Davidson 1882), a tank near Kalyan, Thane district (Abdulali 1952), Bhigwan (Adesh Shivkar pers. comm. 2015), and near Baramati (Adesh Shivkar pers. comm. 2015). The White-tailed Lapwing is a winter visitor to India (Grimmet et al. 2011). It is a commonly observed bird in northern and central regions but a rare species for western Maharashtra (Anand 2003). This species has not been previously recorded from neither the new location nor from Vasai. Due to its skulking behaviour, the bird may be overlooked and may not be as rare in the region as believed.

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